

IN THE DRAWINGS

Please substitute the attached sheet of drawings for the previously filed drawing sheet including Figures 10(a) and 10(b). In Figure 10(a), the label “PRIOR ART” has been added to the drawing.

REMARKS AND DISCUSSION

Upon entry of the present amendment, Claims 1-4 and 9 remain in the application, and of these, Claims 1, 2, and 9 are independent. New claims 10-14 have been added by the present amendment, and of these, claim 12 is independent. Each of the newly added claims is fully supported by the original disclosure. The above-identified Office Action has been reviewed, the references carefully considered, and the Examiner's comments carefully weighed. The present Amendment is submitted in response to the above-identified Office Action. It is contended that by the present amendment, all bases of rejection set forth in the Office Action have been traversed, and all bases of objection have been overcome. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Section 103 Issues

In the above-identified Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-3 and 5-9 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as anticipated by Dangauthier et al. (US 3,431,035) in view of Vogelgesang et al. (US 6,619,851).

The applicant traverses this ground of rejection, and respectfully submits that no reasonable combination of the teachings of Dangauthier and Vogelgesang would produce applicant's invention, as claimed.

Applicant respectfully disagrees with the functional descriptions assigned to the Dangauthier reference. Most notably, Examiner asserts that elements 9, 10, 12 and 14 are

components of a “spacer collar.” However, Applicant respectfully suggests that these components, in fact, cooperate to make up components of a needle bearing assembly. Specifically, elements 9 and 9' appear to be an inner race of the needle bearings. Additionally, Applicant respectfully suggests that the sealing member 11 is an internal sealing member of the bearing assembly, not a sealing member for the entire suspension arm joint. The reference itself refers to all of these components, as well as stating in column 2, lines 4-6 that the disclosed bearing includes a sleeve 4 and a tubular element 5. Applicant respectfully suggests that the subject invention represents a set of components distinctly different from that disclosed by Dangauthier.

In item 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner characterizes element 13 of Dangauthier as a bearing. Applicant contests this characterization, and points out that the Dangauthier reference characterizes the entire assembly between the suspension arm and the spindle as a single bearing assembly.

Applicant respectfully suggests that Vogelgesang is not available as a 103(a) reference, in that it is non-analogous art to applicant's claimed invention..

Vogelgesang discloses a rolling element bearing for a product conveyor and/or product processing element of a harvesting machine, with the bearing including a rolling element chamber and an antechamber, that protects the rolling elements from the penetration of plant juices. This reference is specifically directed at farm equipment used for harvesting crops.

Applicant respectfully suggests that the Vogelgesang reference is not analogous to the present invention, which relates to a specific structure for a connection between a suspension arm and a vehicle frame part in a vehicular suspension system.

In terms of structure, the support ring 42 of Vogelgesang is attached to the stub or drive shaft. This shaft is not structurally equivalent to the bolt of the subject invention. Moreover, applicant respectfully suggests that there are advantages to having a protective flange integrally included with the spacer collar rather than as a separate component. Such advantages at least include a reduction in the number of component parts required for the suspension arm joint. Additionally, it appears that the support ring 42 is being used a spacer to keep the roller sufficiently away from the sidewall of the crop harvesting machine. Rather than using a spacer with a smaller diameter, a large diameter space was chosen so that there is physically less space for crop debris and juices to infiltrate. Because of this, the two components operate in distinct ways. The support ring 42 acts as a gap filler thereby preventing debris and fluid from reaching the bearing. In the subject invention, the flange of the spacer collar acts as a shield preventing debris and fluids coming from an angular direction from reaching the bearing and sealing rings.

While broadly speaking, both the support ring 42 and the protective flange serve to protect bearings and seals, they do so in functionally distinct ways; one acting to fill a void, while the other acting as a shield.

Perhaps more significantly, Applicant respectfully suggests that the Vogelgesang reference demonstrates non-analogous art that cannot properly form a basis for a 103(a) rejection. Vogelgesang discloses a ball bearing construction for mounting the drive shaft of a roller drum that includes a spacing ring to prevent corrosive substances from reaching the bearing assembly. The spacing ring is described as a ‘support ring’ and is referenced by numeral 42. This reference is specifically directed at farm equipment used for harvesting crops. The harvested crops pass down a conveyer driven by a roller drum. The drive shaft of the roller drum is mounted with the disclosed bearing assembly. In this reference the support ring is essentially a washer shaped ring that is attached to the drive shaft in-between the roller drum and the bearing assembly.

Applicant respectfully suggests that a person constructing a vehicle suspension arm joint would not look to the art of farm equipment. Furthermore, applicant respectfully suggests that a person constructing a vehicle suspension arm joint would not even look to the art of bearing assemblies for supporting a drive shaft.

The Examiner also rejected Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as anticipated by Dangauthier in view of Vogelgesang and in further in view of Niwa et al. (US 6,710,700).

The applicant traverses this ground of rejection, and respectfully submits that no reasonable combination of the teachings of Dangauthier, Vogelgesang and Niwa would produce applicant’s invention, as claimed.

Given that the only added limitation of Claim 4 is that the spacer collar is made of a corrosion-resistant material, and that the only additional prior art suggests bearing components made from corrosion-resistant material, the above argument traversing the rejection of Claims 1-3 and 5-9 also applies to the rejection of claim 4.

In addition, the Niwa reference describes a very specific type of corrosion resistance in a very specific stainless-steel bearing application, and is also not directed to a connection between a suspension arm and a vehicle frame part in a vehicular suspension system.

Applicant disagrees with, and traverses the Examiner's rejections under 35 USC 103, and requests reconsideration and withdrawal thereof.

Claim Amendments

Notwithstanding the above discussion, Applicant has amended the claims in an effort to expedite prosecution of the application. In the present amendment, applicant has amended claims 1, 2, and 9, and has added new claims 10-14.

Claim 1 has been amended to specify that each of the spacer collars includes a substantially cylindrical tube portion for receiving said bolt therethrough, and an integral flange attached to an end of the cylindrical tube portion and extending outwardly therefrom, and that in an installed configuration of the structure, the integral flange is disposed between the suspension arm and the frame bracket.

Applicant respectfully submits that this change distinguishes over the references of

record, and places the claim in condition for allowance.

Claim 2 was amended to reflect the fact that the suspension arm is supported between the two ends of the frame bracket.

Claim 9 has been amended to specify the bearing structure in more detail.

New claims 10-14 all relate to the specific embodiment of the bearing assembly that is disclosed in the specification.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully suggests that as presently amended, all of the pending claims are believed to be allowable.

It is applicant's contention that no possible reading of the references, either alone or in any reasonable combination, can be viewed as teaching applicant's claimed invention.

For all of the above mentioned reasons, applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of record, and allowance of the pending claims.

Applicant respectfully submits that all of the above amendments are fully supported by the original application. Applicant also respectfully submits that the above amendments do not introduce any new matter into the application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the \$200.00 fee for one additional independent claim in excess of three, and is also authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any excess, to Deposit Account 50-0744 in the name of Carrier, Blackman & Associates, P.C.

A Duplicate Copy of this Sheet is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service as First Class Mail, with appropriate postage thereon, in an envelope addressed to the Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on December 27, 2005.

